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SUCCESS STORY

Ditch Repairs Boost Business

Repaired concrete drains also change Afghan perceptions of foreign assistance in Uruzgan



Photo: USAID/CADG

Tirin Kot's residents are pleased to have new concrete drains and sidewalks.



Photo: USAID/CADG

Abdul Wasi, a local shopkeeper and carpenter, says the sidewalks and drains have improved business.

Tirin Kot is the capital and center of business and commerce for all of Uruzgan Province. Recently, the network of storm ditches in the city's business centers deteriorated, causing severe flooding and forcing shopkeepers to close their stores. A community-supported USAID effort to repair the damaged ditches is bringing business back to the market and improving Afghan perceptions of foreign aid.

The network of storm ditches in Tirin Kot is essential to the vitality of local businesses. Given that a lack of economic opportunity is a major driver of instability in Afghanistan, USAID's Food Insecurity Response to Urban Populations (FIRUP) program worked with the community to construct two kilometers of concrete drainage systems and 800 meters of concrete sidewalks. The project, which provided short-term employment for 445 laborers, enjoyed the full support of the Provincial Governor, the Mayor, local elders, and city representatives.

Shopkeepers have noted an increase in business since the completion of the project, and new shops are opening. "This is the largest project we have seen in our bazaar. It is really helping my business," said Abdul Wasi, a local carpenter and shopkeeper. The Mayor of Tirin Kot, Mullah Obidullah Akhound, noted, "The project has employed a poor population that would otherwise resort to joining the insurgency, assisting the poppy harvest, or becoming drug users."

A letter of appreciation from elders in Tirin Kot's surrounding villages shows the positive impact of the project. "This project has brought employment to our family and friends and has given us hope for a better future," wrote the elders. "There is now a different public perception about the assistance given to us by foreigners. This project has changed how we see you as good partners in community development."

FIRUP promotes stability in Afghanistan's most volatile provinces through temporary employment and income generation opportunities to address the drivers of instability and reduce the number of food-insecure and/or unemployed Afghans joining the insurgency.